

SOME·LATER VERSES

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BRET·HARTE

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SOME LATER VERSES

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BY BRET HARTE

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

1898

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BY PINES AND TULE

ARTEMIS IN SIERRA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

POET. PHILOSOPHER. JONES OF MARIPOSA.

POET

HALT! Here we are. Now wheel your mare
a trifle

Just where you stand ; then doff your hat and
swear

Never yet was scene you might cover with your
rifle

Half as complete, or as marvellously fair.

PHILOSOPHER

Dropped from Olympus or lifted out of
Tempe,

Swung like a censer betwixt the earth and
sky !

He, who in Greece sang of flocks and flax and
hemp,—he

Here might recall them—six thousand feet
on high !

POET

Well you may say so ! The clamour of the
river,

Hum of base toil, and man's ignoble strife,

Halt far below, where the stifling sunbeams
quiver,

But never climb to this purer, higher life !

Not to this glade, where Jones of Mariposa,
Simple and meek as his flocks we're looking at,
Tends his soft charge ; nor where his daughter
Rosa . . . (A shot.)

Hallo ! What's that ?

PHILOSOPHER

A—— something thro' my hat—
Bullet, I think.—You were speaking of his
daughter ?

POET

Yes ; but—your hat you were moving through
the leaves ;
Likely he thought it some eagle bent on
slaughter.
Lightly he shoots. (A second shot.)

PHILOSOPHER

As one readily perceives.

Still, he improves ! This time *your* hat has
got it,

Quite near the band ! Eh ? Oh, just as you
please,—

Stop, or go on.

POET

Perhaps we'd better trot it
Down through the hollow, and up among the
trees.

BOTH

Trot, trot, trot, where the bullets cannot
follow ;

Trot down and up again among the laurel trees.

PHILOSOPHER

Thanks, that is better ; now of this shot-
dispensing

Jones and his girl—you were saying ?—

POET

Well, you see—

I—hang it all !—Oh ! what's the use of fencing—

Sir, I confess it!—those shots were meant for
me.

PHILOSOPHER

You !—are you mad ?

POET

God knows, I shouldn't wonder !

I love this coy nymph, who, coldly—as yon peak
Shines on the river it feeds, yet keeps asunder—

Long have I worshipped, but never dared to
speak.

Till she, no doubt, her Love no longer
hiding,

Waked, by some chance word, her father's
jealousy ;

Slips her disdain — as an avalanche down
gliding

Sweeps flocks and kin away—to clear a path
for *me*.

Hence his attack.

PHILOSOPHER

I see. What I admire

Chiefly, I think, in your idyl, so to speak,
Is the cool modesty that checks your youthful
fire—

Absence of self-love and abstinence of
cheek !

Still, I might mention, *I've* met the gentle Rosa—

Danced with her thrice, to her father's jealous
dread ;

And, it is possible, she's happened to disclose a—

Ahem ! You can fancy why he shoots at *me*
instead.

POET

You ?

PHILOSOPHER

Me. But kindly take your hand from your
revolver ;

I am not choleric—but accidents may chance.
And here's the father, who alone can be the solver
Of this twin riddle of the hat and the romance.

(Enter Jones of Mariposa.)

POET

Speak, shepherd—mine !

PHILOSOPHER

Hail ! Time-and-cartridge-waster !

Aimless exploder of theories and skill!—

Whom do you shoot ?

JONES OF MARIPOSA

Well, shootin' ain't my taste, or

Ef *I* shoot anything—I only shoot to kill.

That ain't what's up. I only kem to tell ye—

Sportin' or courtin'—trot homeward for your
life!

Gals will be gals, and p'raps it's just ez well ye

Larned there was one had no wish to be—
a wife.

POET

What ?

PHILOSOPHER

Is this true ?

JONES OF MARIPOSA

I reckon it looks like it.

She saw ye comin'. My gun was standin' by ;
She made a grab, and 'fore I up could strike it,
Blazed at ye both ! The critter is *so* shy !

POET

Who ?

JONES OF MARIPOSA

My darter !

PHILOSOPHER

Rosa ?

JONES OF MARIPOSA

Same ! Good-bye !

B

JACK OF THE TULE

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

SHREWDLY you question, Señor, and I fancy
You are no novice. Confess that to little
Of my poor gossip of Mission and Pueblo
You are a stranger !

Am I not right ? Ah, believe me, that ever
Since we joined company at the *posada*,
I've watched you closely, and—pardon an old
priest—

I've caught you smiling !

Smiling to hear an old fellow like me talk
Gossip of pillage and robbers, and even
Air his opinion of law and *alcaldes*

Like any other !

Now !—by that twist of the wrist on the bridle,
By that straight line from the heel to the shoulder,
By that curt speech—nay ! nay !—no offence,
son,

You are a soldier ?

No ? Then a man of affairs ? San Sebastian ;
'Twould serve me right if I prattled thus wildly
To—say a sheriff ? No ?—just *caballero* ?

Well, more's the pity.

Ah ! what we want here's a man of your presence ;
Sano, Secreto,—yes, all the four S's,
Joined with a boldness and dash, when the time
comes,

And—may I say it ?—

One not *too* hard on the poor country people—
Peons and silly vaqueros—who, dazzled
By reckless skill and, perchance, reckless largesse,
Wink at some queer things.

No ? you would crush *them* as well as the robbers ;
Root them out—scatter them ? Ah, you are
bitter—

And yet—*quien sabe*, perhaps that's the one way
To catch their leader.

As to myself, now, I'd share your displeasure—
For I admit in this Jack of the Tules
Certain good points. He still comes to confes-
sion—

You'd "like to catch him" ?

Ah, if you did at such times, you might lead him
Home by a thread. Good ! again you are smiling :
You have no faith in such shrift—and but little
In priest or penitent.

Bueno ! We take no offence, sir ; whatever
It please you to say ; it becomes us, for Church
sake,
To bear in peace. Yet, if you were kinder—
And less suspicious—

I might still prove to you, Jack of the Tules
Shames not our teaching—nay, even might show
 you,
Hard by this spot, his old comrade, who, wounded,
 Lives on his bounty.

If—ah, you listen !—I see I can trust you ;
Then, on your word as a gentleman—follow.
Under that sycamore stands the old cabin ;
 There sits his comrade.

Eh !—are you mad ? You would try to *arrest*
 him ?

You, with a warrant ? Oh, well, take the rest of
 them :

Pedro, Bill, Murray, Pat Doolan. Hey ! all of you,
 Tumble out,—d—mn it !

There !—that'll do, boys ! Stand back ! Ease his
elbows ;

Take the gag from his mouth. Good ! Now
scatter like devils

After his *posse*—four straggling, four drunken—

At the *posada*.

You,—help me off with these togs, and then *vamos* !

Now, ole Jeff Dobbs !—Sheriff, Scout, and Detec-
tive !

You're so derved 'cute ! Kinder sick, ain't ye,
bluffing

Jack of the Tules !

THE OLD CAMP FIRE

Now shift the blanket pad before your saddle
back you fling,

And draw your sinch up tighter till the sweat
drops from the ring :

We've a dozen miles to cover ere we reach the
next divide.

Our limbs are stiffer now than when we first set
out to ride,

And worse, the horses know it, and feel the leg-
grip tire,

Since in the days when long ago, we sought the
old camp fire.

Yes, twenty years! Lord! how we'd scent its
incense down the trail,

Through balm of bay and spice of spruce, when
eye and ear would fail,

And worn and faint from useless quest we crept,
like this, to rest,

Or, flushed with luck and youthful hope, we rode,
like this, abreast.

Aye! Straighten up, old friend, and let the
mustang think he's nigher,

Through looser rein and stirrup strain, the wel-
come old camp fire.

You know the shout that would ring! out before
us down the glade,

And start! the blue jays like a flight of arrows
through the shade,

And sift the thin pine needles down like slanting,
 shining rain,
And send the squirrels scampering back to their
 holes again,
Until we saw, blue-veiled and dim, or leaping like
 desire,
That flame of twenty years ago—which lit the old
 camp fire.

And then that rest on Nature's breast, when talk
 had dropped, and slow
The night-wind went from tree to tree with
 challenge soft and low !—
We lay on lazy elbows propped, or stood to stir
 the flame,
Till up the soaring redwood's shaft our shadows
 danced and came,

As if to draw us with the sparks, high o'er its
unseen spire

To the five stars that kept their ward above the
old camp fire—

Those picket stars whose tranquil watch half
soothed, half shamed our sleep,

What recked we then what beasts or men around
might lurk or creep !

We lay and heard with listless ears the far-off
panther's cry,

The near coyote's snarling snap, the grizzly's
deep-drawn sigh, .

The brown bear's blundering human tread, the
grey wolves' yelping choir

Beyond the magic circle drawn around the old
camp fire.

And then that morn ! was ever morn so filled with
all things new ?

The light that fell through long brown aisles from
out the kindling blue,

The creak and yawn of stretching boughs, the jay-
bird's early call,

The rat-tat-tat of woodpecker that waked the
woodland hall,

The fainter stir of lower life in fern and brake
and brier,

Till flashing leaped the torch of Day from last
night's old camp fire !

.

Well, well ! we'll see it once again—we should be
near it now ;

It's scarce a mile to where the trail strikes off to
skirt the slough,

And then the dip to Indian Spring, the wooded
rise and—strange !

Yet here should stand the blasted pine that marked
our farther range ;

And here—what's this ? A ragged swale of ruts
and stumps and mire !

Sure this is not the sacred grove that hid the old
camp fire !

Yet here's the "blaze" I cut myself, and there's
the stumbling ledge,

With quartz "outcrop" that lay atop, now levelled
to its edge,

And mounds of moss-grown stumps beside the
woodman's rotting chips,

And gashes in the hill-side, that gape with dumb
red lips.

And yet above the shattered wreck and ruin,
curling higher—

Ah yes!—still lifts the smoke that marked the
welcome old camp-fire !

Perhaps some friend of twenty years still lingers
there to raise

To weary hearts and tired eyes that beacon of old
days.

Perhaps—but stay ; 'tis gone ! and yet once more
it lifts as though

To meet our tardy blundering steps, and seems
to *move*, and lo !

Whirls by us in a rush of sound—the vanished
funeral pyre

Of hopes and fears that twenty years burned in
the old camp fire !

For see, beyond, the prospect spreads, with chimney, spire, and roof,—

Two iron bands across the trail clank to our mustang's hoof ;

Above them leap two blackened threads from limb-lopped tree to tree,

To where the whitewashed station speeds its message to the sea.

Rein in ! Rein in ! The quest is o'er. The goal of our desire

Is but the train whose track has lain across the old camp fire !

“CROTALUS”

RATTLESNAKE BAR, SIERRAS

No life in earth, or air, or sky ;
The sunbeams, broken silently,
On the bared rocks around me lie—

Cold rocks, with half-warmed lichens scarred,
And scales of moss ; and scarce a yard
Away, one long strip, yellow-barred.

Lost in a cleft ! 'Tis but a stride
To reach it, thrust its roots aside,
And lift it on thy stick astride !

Yet stay ! That moment is thy grace !
For round thee, thrilling air and space,
A chattering terror fills the place !

A sound as of dry bones that stir
In the Dead Valley ! By yon fir
The locust stops its noonday whirr !

The wild bird hears. Smote with the sound,
As if by bullet brought to ground,
On broken wing, dips, wheeling round !

The hare, transfixed, with trembling lip,
Halts, breathless, on pulsating hip,
And palsied tread, and heels that slip.

.

Enough, old friend !—'tis thou. Forget
My heedless foot, nor longer fret
The peace with thy grim castanet !

I know thee ! Yes ! Thou may'st forego
That lifted crest ; the measured blow
Beyond which thy pride scorns to go,

Or yet retract ! For me no spell
Lights those slit orbs, where, some think, dwell
Machicolated fires of hell !

I only know thee—humble—bold—
Haughty—with miseries untold,
And the old curse that left thee cold,

And drove thee ever to the sun,
On blistering rocks ; nor made thee shun
Our cabin's hearth, when day was done ;

And the spent ashes warmed thee best ;
We knew thee—silent, joyless guest
Of our rude ingle. E'en thy quest

Of the rare milk-bowl seemed to be
Naught but a brother's poverty,
And Spartan taste that kept thee free

From lust and rapine. Thou ! whose fame
Searchest the grass with tongue of flame,
Making all creatures seem thy game—

When the whole woods before thee run,
Asks but—when all is said and done—
To lie—untrodden—in the sun !

THE STATION-MASTER OF LONE PRAIRIE

AN empty bench, a sky of greyest etching,
A bare, bleak shed in blackest silhouette,
Twelve yards of platform, and beyond them
stretching

Twelve miles of prairie glimmering through the wet.

North, South, East, West—the same dull grey
persistence,

The tattered vapours of a vanished train,
The narrowing rails that meet to pierce the
distance,—

Or break the columns of the far-off rain.

38 THE STATION-MASTER OF LONE PRAIRIE

Naught but myself—nor form nor figure breaking
The long hushed level and stark shining waste—
Nothing that moves to fill the vision aching,
When the last shadow fled in sullen haste.

Nothing but this. Ah, yes ! beside the station
Its stiff gaunt keeper turns to me at last,
Beckoning me with a wooden salutation—
Raised like his signal—when the up-train passed.

Offering the bench, beside him, with dumb
gesture—

Born of that reticence in sky and air—
Then sat we both — enwrapped in that one
vesture—

Of silence, sadness, and unspoken care.

Each following his own thought—around us
darkening

The rain-washed boundaries and stretching track—
Each following those dim parallels, and hearkening
For long-lost voices that would not come back.

Until, unasked—I knew not why or wherefore—
He yielded, bit by bit, his dreary past,
Like gathered clouds that seemed to thicken there
for

Some dull down-dropping of their care at last.

Long had he lived there. When a boy, had started
From the stacked corn the Indian's painted face ;
Heard the wolves' howl the wearying waste that
parted

His father's hut from the last camping place.

Nature had mocked him ; thrice had claimed the
reaping

With scythe of fire the lands she once had sown ;
Sent the tornado—round his hearthstone heaping
Rafters, dead faces—that were like his own.

Then came the War Time. When its shadow
beckoned

He had walked dumbly where the flag had led
Through swamp and fen—unknown, unpraised,
unreckoned,
To famine, fever, and a prison bed.

Till the storm passed, and the slow tide returning
Cast him, a wreck, beneath his native sky,
Here near his home, gave him the chance of earning
Scant means to live—who won the right to die.

All this I heard — or seemed to hear — half
blending

With the low murmur of the coming breeze,
The call of some lost bird, and the unending
And tireless sobbing of those grassy seas.

Until at last the spell of desolation
Broke with a trembling star and far-off cry.
The coming train ! I glanced around the
station.

All was as empty as the upper sky !

Naught but myself—nor form nor figure waking
The long hushed level and stark shining waste—
Naught but myself, that cry, and the dull shaking
Of wheel and axle, stopped in breathless haste !

“Now then—look sharp! Eh, what? The
Station-Master?

Thar's none! We stopped here of our own
accord.

The man got killed in that down-train disaster
This time last evening. Right there! All aboard!”

THE MISSION BELLS OF MONTEREY

O BELLS that rang, O bells that sang
Above the martyrs' wilderness,
Till from that reddened coast-line sprang
The Gospel seed to cheer and bless,
What are your garnered sheaves to-day ?
O Mission bells ! Eleison bells !
O Mission bells of Monterey !

O bells that crash, O bells that clash
Above the chimney-crowded plain,
On wall and tower your voices dash,
But never with the old refrain

44 THE MISSION BELLS OF MONTEREY

In mart and temple gone astray !

Ye dangle bells ! Ye jangle bells !

Ye wrangle bells of Monterey !

O bells that die, so far, so nigh,

Come back once more across the sea,

Not with the zealot's furious cry,

Not with a creed's austerity,

Come with His love alone to stay.

O Mission bells ! Eleison bells !

O Mission bells of Monterey !

HER LAST LETTER

BEING A REPLY TO "HIS ANSWER"

JUNE 4th ! Do you know what that date means|?

June 4th ! By this air and these pines ?

Well,—only you know how I hate scenes,—

These might be my very last lines !

For perhaps, sir, you'll kindly remember—

If some *other* things you've forgot—

That you last wrote the 4th of *December*,—

Just six months ago !—from this spot.

From this spot, that you said was "the fairest

For once being held in my thought."

Now, really I call that the barest

Of—well, I won't say what I ought !

For here *I* am back from my "riches,"

My "triumphs," my "tours," and all that ;

And *you're* not to be found in the ditches

Or temples of Poverty Flat !

From Paris we went for the season

To London, when pa wired, "Stop."

Mama says "his *health*" was the reason.

(I've heard that some things took a "drop.")

But she said if my patience I'd summon

I could go back with him to the Flat—

Perhaps I was thinking of some one

Who of me—well—was not thinking *that* !

Of course you will *say* that I “never

Replied to the letter you wrote.”

That is just like a man ! But, however,

I read it—or how could I quote ?

And as to the stories you’ve heard (No,

Don’t tell me you haven’t—I know !),

You’ll not believe one blessed word, Joe ;

But just whence they came, let them go !

And they came from Sade Lotski of Yolo,

Whose father sold clothes on the Bar—

You called him Job-lotski, you know, Joe,

And the boys said *her* value was *par*.

Well, we met her in Paris—just flaring

With diamonds, and lost in a hat !

And she asked me “How Joseph was faring

In his love-suit on Poverty Flat” !

She thought it would shame me ! I met her

With a look, Joe, that made her eyes drop ;

And I said that your "love-suit fared better

Than any suit out of *their* shop !"

And I didn't blush *then*—as I'm doing

To find myself here, all alone,

And left, Joe, to do all the "sueing"

To a lover that's certainly flown.

In this brand-new hotel, called "The Lily"

(I wonder who gave it that name ?),

I really am feeling quite silly,

To think I was once called the same ;

And I stare from its windows, and fancy

I'm labelled to each passer-by.

Ah ! gone is the old necromancy,

For nothing seems right to my eye.

On that hill there are stores that I knew not ;
 There's a street—where I once lost my way ;
And the copse where you once tied my shoe-knot
 Is shamelessly open as day !
And that bank by the spring—I once drank there,
 And you called the place Eden, you know ;
Now I'm banished like Eve—though the bank there
 Belongs now to “Adams and Co.”

There's the rustle of silk on the side-walk ;
 Just now there passed by a tall hat ;
But there's gloom in this “boom” and this wild talk
 Of the “future” of Poverty Flat.

There's a decorous chill in the air, Joe,
 Where once we were simple and free ;
And I hear they've been making a mayor, Joe,
 Of the man who shot Sandy McGee.

But there's still the "lap, lap" of the river ;

There's the song of the pines, deep and low.

(How my longing for them made me quiver

In the park that they call Fontainebleau !)

There's the snow-peak that looked on our dances,

And blushed when the morning said, "Go !"

There's a lot that remains which one fancies—

But somehow there's never a Joe !

Perhaps, on the whole, it is better,

For you might have been changed like the rest ;

Though it's strange that I'm trusting this letter

To papa, just to have it addressed.

He thinks he may find you, and really

Seems kinder now I'm all alone.

You might have been here, Joe, if merely

To *look* what I'm willing to *own*.

Well, well ! that's all past ; so good night, Joe ;
Good night to the river and Flat ;
Good night to what's wrong and what's right, Joe ;
Good night to the past, and all that—
To Harrison's barn, and its dancers ;
To the moon, and the white peak of snow ;
And good night to the cañon that answers
My "Joe !" with its echo of "No !"

P.S.

I've just got your note. You deceiver !
How dared you—how *could* you ? Oh, Joe !
To think I've been kept a believer
In things that were six months ago !
And it's *you've* built this house, and the bank, too ;
And the mills, and the stores, and all that !
And for everything changed I must thank *you*,
Who have "struck it" on Poverty Flat !

How dared you get rich—you great stupid!—

Like papa, and some men that I know,
Instead of just trusting to Cupid

And to me for your money? Ah, Joe!
Just to think you sent never a word, dear,
Till you wrote to papa for consent!

Now I know why they had me transferred here,
And “the health of papa”—what *that* meant!

Now I know why they call this “The Lily”;

Why the man who shot Sandy McGee
You made mayor! ’Twas because—oh, you silly!—

He once “went down the middle” with me!
I’ve been fooled to the top of my bent here,

So come, and ask pardon—you know
That you’ve still got to get *my* consent, dear!

And just think what that echo said—Joe!

LINES TO A PORTRAIT

BY A SUPERIOR PERSON

WHEN I bought you for a song,
Years ago—Lord knows how long !—
I was struck—I may be wrong—

By your features,
And—a something in your air
That I couldn't quite compare
To my other plain or fair

Fellow-creatures.

In your simple, oval frame
You were not well known to fame,
But to me—'twas all the same—
 Whoe'er drew you ;
For your face I can't forget,
Though I oftentimes regret
That, somehow, I never yet
 Saw quite through you.

Yet each morning, when I rise,
I go first to greet your eyes ;
And, in turn, *you* scrutinise .

 My presentment.
And when shades of evening fall,
As you hang upon my wall,
You're the last thing I recall
 With contentment.

It is weakness, yet I know
 That I never turned to go
 Anywhere, for weal or woe,
 But I lingered
 For one parting, thrilling flash
 From your eyes, to give that dash
 To the curl of my moustache,
 That I fingered.

If to some you may seem plain,
 And when people glance again
 Where you hang, their lips refrain
 From confession ;
 Yet they turn in stealth aside,
 And I note, they try to hide
 How much they are satisfied
 In expression.

Other faces I have seen ;
Other forms have come between ;
Other things I have, I ween,
 Done and dared for !
But *our* ties they cannot sever,
And, though *I* should say it never,
You're the only one I ever
 Really cared for !

And you'll still be hanging there
When we're both the worse for wear,
And the silver's on my hair
 And off your backing ;
Yet my faith shall never pass
In my dear old shaving-glass,
Till my face and yours, alas !
 Both are lacking !

OLD TIME AND NEW¹

How well we know that figure limned
On every almanac's first page,
The beard unshorn, the hair untrimmed,
The gaunt limbs bowed and bent with age ;
That well-known glass with sands run out,
That scythe that he was wont to wield
With shrivelled arm, which made us doubt
His power in Life's harvest field !

¹ Written for the first number of the *Time* magazine.

Ah, him we know ! But who comes here
Pranked with the fashion of the town ?
This springald, who in jest or jeer,
Tries on old Time's well-frosted crown !
Vain is his paint ! Youth's freshest down
Through pencilled wrinkles shows too soon
The bright mischievous face of Clown,
Beneath the mask of Pantaloon !

A doubtful jest, howe'er well played
To mock the show of fleeting breath
With youth's light laugh, and masquerade
This gaunt step-brother of grim Death !
Is this a moralist to teach
The equal fate of small and large ?
Peace ! Yet—one moment—yield him speech
Before we give the scamp in charge !

"I crave no grace from those who dream
 Time only *was*, and from the past
 Still draw the wisdom that they deem
 Will only live and only last.
 Time is not *old*, as all who've tried
 To kill or cheat him must attest ;
 And outward symbols cannot hide
 The same firm pulse that stirs your breast.

The old stock properties you preach
 To truer symbols must pay tithe ;
 M'Cormick's reapers better teach
 My truths than your old-fashioned scythe.
 The racing "Timer's" slender vane
 That marks the *quarter seconds* pass,
 Marks too, its moral quite as plain
 As e'er was drawn in sand through glass.

So if I bring in comelier dress

And newer methods, things less new,

I claim that honoured name still less

To be consistent than be true.

If mine be not the face that's cast

In every almanac and rhyme,

Look through them—all that there will last

You'll find within these leaves of 'TIME !' "

REPORTED BY
TRUTHFUL JAMES

THE SPELLING BEE AT ANGEL'S

WALTZ in, waltz in, ye little kids, and gather round
my knee,

And drop them books and first pot-hooks, and
hear a yarn from me.

I kin not sling a fairy tale of Jinnys¹ fierce and
wild,

For I hold it is onchristian to deceive a simple
child;

But as from school yer driftin' by, I thowt ye'd
like to hear

Of a "Spelling Bee" at Angel's that we organised
last year.

¹ Qy. Genii.
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It warn't made up of gentle kids, of pretty kids,
like you,

But gents ez hed their reg'lar growth, and some
enough for two.

There woz Lanky Jim of Sutter's Fork and Bilson
of Lagrange,

And "Pistol Joe," who wore that day a knife by
way of change.

You start, you little kids, you think these are not
pretty names,

But each had a man behind it, and—my name is
Truthful James.

There was Poker Dick from Whisky Flat, and
Smith of Shooter's Bend,

And Brown of Calaveras—which I want no better
friend ;

Three-fingered Jack—yes, pretty dears, three
fingers—*you* have five.

Clapp cut off two—it's sing'lar, too, that Clapp
ain't now alive.

'Twas very wrong indeed, my dears, and Clapp
was much to blame ;

Likewise was Jack, in after-years, for shootin' of
that same.

The nights was kinder lengthenin' out, the rains
had jest begun,

When all the camp came up to Pete's to have
their usual fun ;

But we all sot kinder sad-like around the bar-
room stove

Till Smith got up, permiskiss-like, and this remark
he hove :

"Thar's a new game down in Frisco, that ez far
ez I can see

Beats euchre, poker, and van-toon, they calls the
'Spelling Bee.'"

Then Brown of Calaveras simply hitched his
chair and spake,

"Poker is good enough for me;" and Lanky Jim
sez, "Shake!"

And Joe allowed he wasn't proud, but he must
say right thar

That the man who tackled euchre hed his
education squar.

This brought up Lenny Fairchild, the school-
master, who said

He knew the game, and he would give instruc-
tions on that head.

“For instance, take some simple word,” sez he,
 “like ‘separate’ :

Now who can spell it ?” Dog my skin, ef thar
 was one in eight !

This set the boys all wild at once. The chairs
 was put in row,

And at the head was Lanky Jim, and at the foot
 was Joe.

And high upon the bar itself the schoolmaster was
 raised,

And the bar-keep put his glasses down, and sat
 and silent gazed.

The first word out was “parallel,” and seven let
 it be,

Till Joe waltzed in his “double l” betwixt the
 “a” and “e” ;

For since he drilled them Mexicans in San
Jacinto's fight
Thar warn't no prouder man got up than Pistol
Joe that night—

Till "rhythm" came! He tried to smile, then
said "they had him there,"
And Lanky Jim, with one long stride, got up and
took his chair.

O little kids, my pretty kids, 'twas touchin' to
survey
These bearded men, with weppings on, like
schoolboys at their play.
They'd laugh with glee, and shout to see each
other lead the van,
And Bob sat up as monitor with a cue for a
rattan,

Till the Chair gave out "incinerate," and Brown
said he'd be durned

If any such blamed word as that in school was
ever learned.

When "phthisis" came they all sprang up, and
vowed the man who rung

Another blamed Greek word on them be taken
out and hung.

As they sat down again I saw in Bilson's eye a
flash,

And Brown of Calaveras was a-twistin' his mus-
tache,

And when at last Brown slipped on "gneiss," and
Bilson took his chair,

He dropped some casual words about some folks
who dyed their hair.

And then the Chair grew very white, and the
Chair said he'd adjourn,

But Poker Dick remarked that *he* would wait and
get his turn ;

Then with a tremblin' voice and hand, and with
a wanderin' eye,

The Chair next offered "eider-duck," and Dick
began with "I,"

And Bilson smiled—then Bilson shrieked ! Just
how the fight begun

I never knowed, for Bilson dropped, and Dick,
he moved up one.

Then certain gents arose and said "They'd busi-
ness down in camp,"

And "ez the road was rather dark, and ez the
night was damp,

They'd"—here got up Three-fingered Jack and
locked the door and yelled :

"No, not one mother's son goes out till that thar
word is spelled !"

But while the words were on his lips, he groaned
and sank in pain,

And sank with Webster on his chest and
Worcester on his brain.

Below the bar dodged Poker Dick, and tried to
look ez he

Was huntin' up authorities thet no one else could
see ;

And Brown got down behind the stove, allowin'
he "was cold,"

Till it upsot and down his legs the cinders freely
rolled,

And several gents called "Order!" till in his
simple way

Poor Smith began with "O-r"—"Or"—and he
was dragged away.

Oh little kids, my pretty kids, down on your knees
and pray!

You've got your eddication in a peaceful sort of
way;

And bear in mind thar may be sharps ez slings
their spellin' square,

But likewise slings their bowie-knives without a
thought or care.

You wants to know the rest, my dears? Thet's
all! In me you see

The only gent that lived to tell about the Spellin'
Bee!

He ceased and passed, that truthful man ; the
children went their way

With downcast heads and downcast hearts —
but not to sport or play.

For when at eve the lamps were lit, and supper-
less to bed

Each child was sent, with tasks undone and les-
sons all unsaid,

No man might know the awful woe that thrilled
their youthful frames,

As they dreamed of Angel's Spelling Bee, and
thought of Truthful James.

A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

IT was Andrew Jackson Sutter who, despising
Mr. Cutter for remarks he heard him utter
in debate upon the floor,

Swung him up into the skylight, in the peaceful, pensive twilight, and then keardlessly proceeded, makin' no account what *we* did—

To wipe up with his person casual dust upon
the floor.

Now a square fight never frets me, nor unpleasantness upsets me, but the simple thing that gets me—now the job is done and gone,

And we've come homè free and merry from the peaceful cemetery, leavin' Cutter there with Sutter—that mebbe just a stutter

On the part of Mr. Cutter caused the loss we deeply mourn.

Some bashful hesitation, just like spellin' punctuation—might have worked an aggravation onto Sutter's mournful mind,

For the witnesses all vary ez to what was said, and nary a galoot will toot his horn except the way he is inclined.

But they all allow that Sutter had begun a kind of mutter, when uprose Mr. Cutter with a sickening kind of ease,

And proceeded then to wade in to the subject then pervadin' : "Is Profanity degradin' ?" in words like unto these :

"Unlike the previous speaker, Mr. Cutter of Yreka, he was but a humble seeker—and not like him—a cuss——"

It was here that Mr. Sutter softly reached for Mr. Cutter, when the latter with a stutter said: "ac-customed to discuss."

Then Sutter he rose grimly, and sorter smilin' dimly, bowed onto the chairman primly (just like Cutter ez could be !)

Drawled "He guessed he must fall—back—as—Mr. Cutter owned the pack—as—he just had played the — Jack — as ——" (here Cutter's gun went crack ! as Mr. Sutter gasped and ended) "every man can see !"

But William Henry Pryor—just in range of Sutter's fire—here evinced a wild desire to do somebody harm—

And in the general scrimmage no one thought if Sutter's "image" was a misplaced punctuation—like the hole in Pryor's arm.

For we all waltzed in together, never carin' to
ask whether it was Sutter or was Cutter
we woz tryin' to abate.

But we couldn't help perceivin', when we took
to inkstand heavin', that the process was
relievin' to the sharpness of debate.

So we've come home free and merry from the
peaceful cemetery, and I make no commen-
tary on these simple childish games ;

Things is various and human—and the man
ain't born of woman who is free to inter-
meddle with his pals' intents and aims.

THE THOUGHT-READER OF ANGEL'S

WE hev tumbled ez dust

Or ez worms of the yearth ;

Wot we looked for hez bust !

We are objects of mirth !

They have played us—old Pards of the river !—

they hev played us for all we was worth !

Was it euchre or draw

Cut us off in our bloom ?

Was it faro, whose law

Is uncertain ez doom ?

Or an innocent "Jack pot" that—opened—was

to us ez the jaws of the tomb ?

It was nary ! It kem

With some sharps from the States,

Ez folks sez, " All things kem

To the fellers ez waits " ;

And we'd waited six months for that suthin'—

had me and Bill Nye—in such straits !

And it kem. It was small ;

It was dream-like and weak ;

It wore store clothes—that's all

That we knew, so to speak ;

But it called itself " Billson, Thought-Reader "—

which ain't half a name for its cheek !

He could read wot you thought,

And he knew wot you did ;

He could find things untaught,

No matter whar hid ;

And he went to it, blindfold and smiling, being
led by the hand like a kid !

Then I glanced at Bill Nye,

And I sez, without pride,

“ You’ll excuse *us*. We’ve nigh

Onto nothin’ to hide ;

But if some gent will lend us a twenty, we’ll
hide it whar folks shall decide.”

It was Billson's own self
Who forked over the gold,
With a smile. "Thar's the pelf,"
He remarked, "I make bold
To advance it, and go twenty better that I'll
find it without being told."

Then I passed it to Nye,
Who repassed it to me.
And we bandaged each eye
Of that Billson—ez we
Softly dropped that coin in his coat pocket, ez
the hull crowd around us could see.

That was all. He'd one hand

Locked in mine. Then he groped.

We could not understand

Why that minit Nye sloped.

For we knew we'd the dead thing on Billson—
even more than we dreamed of or hoped.

For he stood thar in doubt

With his hand to his head ;

Then he turned, and lit out

Through the door where Nye fled.

Draggin' me and the rest of us arter, while we
larfed till we thought we was dead,

Till he overtook Nye

And went through him. Words fail

For what follers ! Kin I

Paint our agonised wail

Ez he drew from Nye's pocket that twenty wot
we'd sworn was in his own coat tail !

And it *was* ! But, when found,

It proved bogus and brass !

And the question goes round

How the thing kem to pass ?

Or, if *passed*, woz it passed thar by William ;
and I listens, and echoes " Alas !

“For the days when the skill
Of the keerds was no blind,
When no effort of will
Could beat four of a kind,
When the thing wot you held in your hand,
Pard, was worth more than the thing in
your mind.”

“FREE SILVER AT ANGEL’S”

I RESIDE at Table Mountain, and my name is

Truthful James,|

I have told the tale of “William” and^mof “Ah

Sin’s” sinful games ;

I have yarned of “Our Society,” and certain

gents I know,

Yet my words were plain and simple, and I

never yet was low.

Thar is high-toned gents, ink-slingers ; thar is

folks as will allow

Ye can’t reel off a story onless they’ve taught

ye how ;

Till they get the word *they're* wantin', *they're*
allus cryin' "Whoa!"

All the while their mule is pullin'—(that's their
"Pegasus," you know).

We ain't built that way at Angel's—but why
pursue this theme?

When things is whirling round us in a wild de-
lusive dream;

When "fads" on "bikes" go scorchin' down to
—t'other place you know

(For I speak in simple language—and I never
yet was low).

It was rainin' up at Angel's—we war sittin' round
the bar,

Discussin' of "Free Silver" that was "going
soon to par,"

And Ah Sin stood thar a listenin' like a simple
guileless child,

That hears the Angel's singin'—so dreamy like
he smiled.

But we knew while he was standin' thar—of all
that heathen heard

And saw—he never understood a single blessed
word ;

Till Brown of Calaveras, who had waltzed up
on his bike,

Sez : "What is *your* opinion, John, that this
Free Silver's like ?"

But Ah Sin said "No shabbee," in his childish
simple way,

And Brown he tipped a wink at us and then he
had *his* say :

He demonstrated then and thar how silver was
as good

As gold—if folks warn't blasted fools, and only
understood!

He showed how we "were crucified upon a
cross of gold"

By millionaires, and banged his fist, until our
blood ran cold.

He was a most convincin' man—was Brown in
all his ways,

And his skill with a revolver, folks had oft
remarked with praise.

He showed us how the ratio should be as "six-
teen to one,"

And he sorted out some dollars—while the boys
enjoyed the fun—

And laid them on the counter—and heaped 'em
in a pile,

While Ah Sin, *he* drew nearer with his happy,
pensive smile.

"The heathen in his blindness bows down to
wood and stone,"

Said Brown, "but this poor heathen won't bow
to gold alone ;

So speak, my poor Mongolian, and show us
your idee

Of what we call 'Free Silver' and what is meant
by 'Free.'"

Swift was the smile that stole across that
heathen's face ! I grieve

That swifter was the hand that swept those
dollars up his sleeve.

"Me shabbee 'Silvel' allee same as Mellican
man," says he,

"Me shabbee 'Flee' means 'B'longs to none,'
so Chinaman catch *he* !"

Now, childlike as his logic was, it didn't justify
The way the whole crowd went for him with-
out a reason why ;

And the language Brown made use of I shall
not attempt to show,

For my words are plain and simple, and I never
yet was low.

Then Abner Dean called "Order !" and he said
"that it would seem

The gentleman from China's deductions were
extreme ;

I move that we should teach him, in a manner
that shall strike,
The ‘bi-metallic balance’ on Mr. Brown’s new
bike !”

Now Dean was scientific—but was sinful too and
gay,
And I hold it most improper for a gent to act
that way,
And having muddled Ah Sin’s brains with that
same silver craze,
To set him on a bicycle—and he not know its
ways.

Then set him on and set him off ; it surely
seemed a sin
To see him waltz from left to right, and wobble
out and in,

Till his pigtail caught within the wheel and wound
up round its rim,

And that bicycle got up and reared—and then
crawled over him.

"My poor Mongolian friend," said Dean, "it's
plain that in your case

Your centre point of gravity don't fall within
your base.

We'll tie the silver in a bag and hang it from
your queue,

And then—by scientific law—you'll keep your
balance true!"

They tied that silver to his queue, and it hung
down behind,

But always straight, no matter which the side
Ah Sin inclined—

For though a sinful sort of man—and lightsome,
too, I ween—

He was no slouch in *Science*—was Mister Abner
Dean !

And here I would remark how vain are all de-
ceitful tricks—

The boomerang we throw comes back to give
us its last licks—

And that same weight on Ah Sin's queue set him
up straight and plumb,

And he scooted past us down the grade and left
us cold and dumb !

"Come back ! Come back !" we called at last. We
heard a shriek of glee,

And something sounding strangely like "All
litee ! Silvel's flee !"

And saw his feet tucked on the wheel—the bike
go all alone!

And break the biggest record Angel’s Camp had
ever known!

He raised the hill without a spill, and still his
speed maintained,

For why?—he travelled on the sheer momentum
he had gained,

And vanished like a meteor—with his queue
stretched in the gale,

Or I might say a Comet—takin’ in that silver tail!

But not again we saw his face—nor Brown his
“Silver Free”!

And I marvel in my simple mind howe’er these
things can be!

But I do not reproduce the speech of Brown
who saw him go,
For my words are pure and simple—and I
never yet was low !

LITTLE POSTERITY

THE BIRDS OF CIRENCESTER

DID I ever tell you, my dears, the way
That the birds of 'Cisseter—"Cisseter!" eh?
Well "Ciren-cester"—one *ought* to say,
From "Castra," or "Caster,"
As your Latin master
Will further explain to you some day;
Though even the wisest err,
And Shakespeare writes "*Ci*-cester,"
While every visitor
Who doesn't say "Cissiter"
Is in "Ciren-cester" considered astray.

A hundred miles from London town—

Where the river goes curving and broadening
down

From tree-top to spire, and spire to mast,
Till it tumbles outright in the Channel at
last—

A hundred miles from that flat foreshore
That the Danes and the Northmen haunt no
more—

There's a little cup in the Cotswold hills
Which a spring in a meadow bubbles and
fills,

Spanned by a heron's wing — crossed by a
stride—

Calm and untroubled by dreams of pride,
Guiltless of fame or ambition's aims,
That is the source of the lordly Thames !

Remark here again that custom condemns
Both "Thames" and "Thamis"—you must *say*
"Tems !"

But *why*? no matter!—from them you can
see

Cirencester's tall spires loom up o'er the lea.

A.D. Five Hundred and Fifty-two,
The Saxon invaders—a terrible crew—
Had forced the lines of the Britons through ;
And Cirencester—half mud and thatch,
Dry and crisp as a tinder match,
Was fiercely beleaguered by foes, who'd
catch

At any device that could harry and rout
The folk that so boldly were holding out.

For the streets of the town—as you'll see to-day—

Were twisted and curved in a curious way
That kept the invaders still at bay ;
And the longest bolt that a Saxon drew
Was stopped ere a dozen of yards it flew,
By a turn in the street, and a law so true
That even these robbers—of all law scorers !—
Knew you couldn't shoot arrows *around* street
corners.

So they sat them down on a little knoll,
And each man scratched his Saxon poll,
And stared at the sky, where, clear and
high,
The birds of that summer went singing by,

As if, in his glee, each motley jester
Were mocking the foes of Cirencester,
Till the jeering crow and the saucy linnet
Seemed all to be saying: "Ah! you're not
in it!"

High o'er their heads the mavis flew,
And the "ouzel-cock so black of hue;"
And the "throstle," with his "note so true"
(You remember what Shakespeare says — *he*
knew);
And the soaring lark, that kept dropping through
Like a bucket spilling in wells of blue;
And the merlin—seen on heraldic panes—
With legs as vague as the Queen of Spain's;
And the dashing swift that would *ricochet*
From the tufts of grasses before them, yet—

Like bold Antæus—would each time bring
New life from the earth, barely touched by his
wing ;

And the swallow and martlet that always knew
The straightest way home. Here a Saxon churl
drew

His breath—tapped his forehead—an idea *had*
got through !

So they brought them some nets, which
straightway they filled
With the swallows and martlets—the sweet
birds who build

In the houses of man—all that innocent guild
Who sing at their labour on eaves and in thatch—
And they stuck on their feathers a rude lighted
match

Made of resin and tow. Then they let them
all go

To be free! As a childlike diversion? Ah,
no!

To work Cirencester's red ruin and woe.

For straight to each nest they flew, in wild
quest

Of their homes and their fledgelings—that they
loved the best;

And straighter than arrow of Saxon e'er
sped

They shot o'er the curving streets, high over-
head,

Bringing fire and terror to roof-tree and
bed,

Till the town broke in flame, wherever they
came,

To the Briton's red ruin—the Saxon's red
shame !

Yet they're all gone together ! To-day you'll
dig up
From "mound" or from "barrow" some arrow
or cup.

Their fame is forgotten—their story is ended—
'Neath the feet of the race they have mixed
with and blended.

But the birds are unchanged—the ouzel-cock
sings,
Still gold on his crest and still black on his
wings ;

And the lark chants on high, as he mounts to
the sky,

Still brown in his coat and still dim in his
eye ;

While the swallow or martlet is still a free
nester

In the eaves and the roofs of thrice-built
Cirencester.

WHAT MISS EDITH SAW FROM HER WINDOW

OUR window's not much—though it fronts on
the street,

There's a fly in the pane that gets nothin' to eat,
But it's curious how people think it's a treat

For *me* to look out of the window!

Why, when company comes, and they're all
speaking low

With their chairs drawn together, then some one
says "Oh!

Edith dear!—that's a good child—Now run,
love, and go

And amuse yourself there at the window!"

Or Bob—that's my brother—comes in with his
chum,

And they whisper and chuckle—the same words
will come.

And it's "Edith—look here!—Oh, I say! what a
rum

Lot of things you can see from that
window!"

And yet, as I told you, there's only that fly
Buzzing round in the pane, and a bit of blue
sky,

And the girl in the opposite window, that I

Look at when *she's* sent to *her* win-
dow.

And so, I've been thinking I'd just like to
see

If what goes on behind *her*—goes on behind
me!

And then, goodness gracious! what fun it would
be

For us *both* as we sit by our window!

How we'd know when the parcels were hid in
a drawer,

Or things taken out—that one never sees
more,—

What people come in and go out of the
door,

That *we* never see from the window!

And that night when the stranger came home
with our Jane

I might *see* what I *heard* then—that sounded so
plain—

Like when my wet fingers I rub on the
pane,—

(Which they say *I* shan't do on my
window).

And I'd know why papa shut the door with
a slam,

And said something funny that sounded like
jam,

And then “Edith—where are you?” I said,
“Here I am.”

“Ah, that's right, dear!—look out of the
window!”

They say when I'm grown up these things will
appear

More plain than they do when I look at them
here,

But I think I see some things uncommonly
clear,

As I sit and look down from the window.

What things? Oh, the things that I make up,
you know,

Out of stories I've read—and they all pass
below,

Ali Baba, the Forty Thieves—all in a
row—

Go by, as I look from my window.

That's only at Church time ; other days there's
no crowd.

Don't laugh ! See that big man who looked
up and bowed ?

That's our butcher — *I* call him the Sultan
Mahoud

When he nods to me here at the win-
dow !

And *that* man—he's our neighbour—just gone
for a ride,

Has three wives in the churchyard that lie side
by side.

So I call him "Bluebeard in search of his
bride,"

While I'm Sister Anne at the window.

And what do I call you? Well, here's what

I *do*:

When my sister expects you—she puts me here
too.

But I wait till you enter—to see if it's you,

And then—I just *open* the window!

“Dear child!” Yes, that's me! Oh, you ask
what that's for?

Well, papa says you're “Poverty's self”—and
no more,

So I open the window—when you're “*at the
door*”—

To see “Love fly out of the window!”

“HASTA MAÑANA ”

WHEN all's in bud, and the leaf still unfolding,
ing,

When there are ruby points still on the
spray,

When that prim school gown your charms are
withholding,

Then Manuela, child, well may you say :

“ Hasta Mañana, Hasta Mañana.

Until to-morrow—*amigo*, alway.”

When Manuela, white, crimson, and yellow,
Peep through green sepals the roses of
 May,
And through black laces the bloom of your
 face is
Fresh as those roses, child, still you may
 say :

Through your *mantilla*—coy Manuela !

“Hasta Mañana, *amigo*, alway.”

When all's in bloom, and the rose in its
 passion
Warmed on your bosom would never say
 nay,

Still it is wise—in your own country fashion—

Under your opening fan, only to say :

“Hasta Mañana ! Hasta Mañana !

Until to-morrow, *amigo*, alway.”

When all is grey and the roses are scattered,

Hearts may have broken that brook no delay,

Yet will to-morrow, surcease of sorrow

Bring unto eyes and lips that still can say :

“Hasta Mañana, Hasta Mañana !

Until to-morrow is best for to-day !”

Phrase of Castilian lands ! Speech, that in
languor

Softly procrastinates, for “aye” or “nay,”

From Seville's orange groves to remote Yangua,
Best heard on rosy lips—let thy words say :

“Hasta Mañana, Hasta Mañana,
Until to-morrow, *amigo*, alway !”

THE END

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